

Message Text

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ORIGIN ARA-10

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PA-01 RSC-01 USIA-04 PRS-01 SP-02 JUSE-00 SEC-01 SS-14

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TO AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (OMISSION OF TEXT)

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, CPRS, CR

SUBJECT: VESCO EXTRADITION EFFORT QUESTIONED

1. TAKEN FROM THE WASHINGTON POST, TUESDAY OCTOBER 8, 1974.

QUOTE BEGIN:

NEW COSTA RICAN LAW HELPED FUGITIVE

COSTA RICAN PRESIDENT DANIEL ODUBER HAS CHRGED THAT
THE US GOVERNMENT'S ATTEMPT TO BRING BACK FUGITIVE FINAN-
CIER ROBERT L. VESCO FOR TRAIL WITH TWO FORMER NIXON CABINET
MEMBERS WAS ARRANGED "IN SUCH A WAY THAT IT SEEMED AIMED AT
THE EXTRADITION FAILING, JUST AS IT DID."

THE CHARGE IS IN A LETTER ODUBER, WHILE PRESIDENT-
ELECT, SENT TO VESCO ON MAY 6. SEN. HENRY M. JACKSON
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(D-WASH.) DISCLOSED IT YESTERDAY AT A HEARING OF HIS

SENATE PERMANENT INVESTIGATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON EFFORTS BY VESCO TO ACQUIRE SOME 2,000 INGRAM M 10 MACHINE GUNS AND ON THE FINANCIER'S REPORTED INTEREST IN FUNDING A FACTORY IN COSTA RICA TO PRODUCE UP TO 500 OF THESE OR OTHER WEAPONS A MONTH.

AFTER SUBCOMMITTEE INVESTIGATIONS LEARNED OF THE EXISTENCE OF THE LETTER, THE COSTA RICAN EMBASSY HERE AUTHENTICATED IT AND PROVIDED A COPY WHICH THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS TRANSLATED FROM SPANISH INTO ENGLISH.

ODUBER WROTE THE LETTER A WEEK AFTER A JURY IN NEW YORK CITY ACQUITTED FORMER ATTORNEY GENERAL JOHN N. MITCHELL AND FORMER COMMERCE SECRETARY MAURICE H. STANS ON ALL NINE COUNTS OF CRIMINAL CONSPIRACY, OBSTRUCTION OF JUSTICE, AND LYING TO A GRAND JURY IN CONNECTION WITH A SECRET 200,000 DOLLARS CASH CONTRIBUTION WHICH VESCO HAD MADE TO PRESIDENT NIXON'S RE-ELECTION CAMPAIGN IN 1972.

CHIEF PROSECUTOR JOHN R. WING, TELLING REPORTERS AFTER THE ACQUITTAL ON APRIL 28 THAT THE VERDICT HAD STUNNED HIM, SAID, "IF WE COULD HAVE GOTTEN VESCO BACK IT WOULD HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT."

THE PROSECUTION HAD ASKED COSTA RICA TO EXTRADITE VESCO FOR TRAIL FOR OBSTRUCTION OF JUSTICE. BUT THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, CONTROLLED BY THEN-PRESIDENT JOSE FIGUERES, WHOSE BUSINESS INTERESTS HAVE RECEIVED MORE THAN 3.5 MILLION DOLLARS FROM VESCO-ASSOCIATED SOURCES, ENACTED ON MARCH 21 A NEW EXTRADITION LAW THAT SEEMED TAILORED TO VESCO'S LEGAL NEEDS.

FOR SEVERAL MONTHS, HOWEVER, THE JACKSON SUB-COMMITTEE HAS BEEN TROUBLED ABOUT WHETHER VESCO MIGHT HAVE COMMITTED AN OFFENSE-INVOLVING NARCOTICS- FOR WHICH HE COULD HAVE BEEN EXTRADITED DESPITE THE NEW LAW, UNDER A CENTURY-OLD AMERICAN-COSTA RICAN TREATY.

THIS POSSIBILITY AROSE ALMOST A YEAR AGO WHEN AN UNDER COVER GOVERNMENT NARCOTICS WORKER, FRANK PEROFF, UNCLASSIFIED

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PROVIDED THE SUBCOMMITTEE AND THE OFFICE OF THE U.S. ATTORNEY IN NEW YORK WITH TAPE RECORDINGS OF HIS CON-SMUGGLING SCHEME, CONRAD BOUCHARD OF MONTREAL.

IN TAPED CONVERSATIONS ON JULY 3 AND JULY 8, 1973, BOUCHARD TOLD PEROFF THAT VESCO OR AN ASSOCIATE IN COSTA RICA, NORMAN P. LEBLANC, WOULD PROVIDE 250,000 DOLLARS TO BUY 100 KILOGRAMS OF HERION IN EUROPE-FOR EVENTUAL

SMUGGLING INTO THE UNITED STATES, WHERE THE DRUG WOULD HAVE A MULTIMILLION-DOLLAR STREET VALUE.

THAT BOUCHARD SAID SUCH THINGS IS UNQUESTIONED, BUT VESCO AND LEBLANC DENY THAT WHAT HE SAID WAS TRUE.

THEIR INVOLVEMENT HAS BEEN NEITHER PROVED NOR DISPROVED BY THE SUBCOMMITTEE, DESPITE A LENGTHY INVESTIGATION IN WHICH IT TOOK SWORN TESTIMONY FROM PEROFF AND NUMEROUS FEDERAL OFFICIALS, INCLUDING PROSECUTOR WING.

YESTERDAY, JACKSON SAID THE TESTIMONY INCLUDED A DISCLOSURE THAT AN ATTEMPT IN DECEMBER, 1973, TO EXTRADITE VESCO FROM THE BAHAMAS-ON A 50,000 DOLLAR FRAUD CHARGE INVOLVING HIS INTERNATIONAL CONTROLS CORP.-ALSO HAD FAILED.

THE BAHAMIAN LAWYER RETAINED BY THE GOVERNMENT TO TRY TO EXTRADITE VESCO WAS CECIL WALLACE-WHITFIELD, WHO "HAD PREVIOUS TIES TO VESCO ENTITIES AND ASSOCIATES," JACKSON SAID. HE DIRECTED HIS STAFF TO LOOK INTO BOTH EXTRADITION EFFORTS.

PRESIDENT ODUBER, IN THE LETTER TO VESCO, TOLD THE FINANCIER THAT WITH THE FIGUERES ERA ENDED, HE WOULD REMOVE ANY OFFICIAL WHO MIGHT BECOME A PARTNER OF THE FINANCIER AND WOULD "ASK YOU TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY."

ODUBER ALSO SAID HE WAS GIVING VESCO 30 DAYS TO LIQUIDATE HIS INVESTMENTS IN "MYSTERIOUS ACTIVITIES" AND RE-DIRECT THE FUNDS INTO FARMING OR TOURISM.

ODUBER ALSO SAID THERE WOULD BE NO MORE SPECIAL UNCLASSIFIED

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CUSTOMS AND IMMIGRATION TREATMENT-AN APPARENT REFERENCE TO THE TRANSPORTING OF 14 AUTOMATIC RIFLES INTO COSTA RICA ABOARD A JET OWNED BY LOS ANGELES STOCKBROKER THOMAS P. RICHARDSON, AN INTIMATE OF VESCO.

IN TESTIMONY YESTERDAY, JAY POWELL COOK SAID ONE REASON HE QUIT AS SKIPPER OF A VESCO YACHT WAS HIS FEAR THAT THE VESSEL WOULD FIRE ON PURSUERS-INCLUDING AMERICAN SHIPS.
END QUOTE

2. SIMILAR, BUT MORE ACCURATE, VERSION ALSO APPEARED IN NYT ON 10/8. INGERSOLL

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